

ETOWAH COUNTY

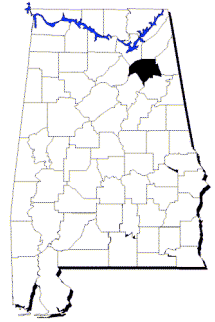
Honorable C. Wayne Owen

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Rachel Farley
David Collins
Brandy King
James Hayes
Dionne Jenkins
Lynne Whisenant



Vista Volunteer: Sheryl Holthof

Council Priorities

1. The community, education officials, and social service providers will be aware of the resources available in Etowah County

The Children's Policy Council will work with community resource providers, the faith community, and officials to provide and distribute information on local resources.

2. A state task force would be established to review criteria for quality childcare and make that information available to local Children's Policy Councils for distribution

To improve evaluation of childcare providers and being able to make that information available to parents.

3. Preventive health services will be made available through state funded resources.

Increase preventive health services available to children, regardless of income, to precipitate health issues from becoming major barriers in the future.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Children in Etowah County will have access to quality child care

Action Steps

- 1) Provide education and information to the Children's Policy Council on a quality rating system for child care in Etowah County.
- 2) Support local child care centers by offering the "Going to School" curriculum to local child care centers.
- 3) Provide forms to agencies that are working with single mothers to help them apply for child care subsidies.

Children in Etowah County will have the skills necessary to succeed in school

Action Steps

- 1) Review the current United Way needs assessment to identify critical issues of school readiness in Etowah County.
- 2) Network with Calhoun County on developing a survey for the: "Blueprint of School Readiness" for Etowah County.

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Youth in Etowah County will have an active voice in assessing community needs

Action Steps

- 1) Conducting a community survey to determine what the barriers are in gaining economic security for their families.
- 2) Using survey data to help reduce the barriers by focusing efforts in the top rated areas of concern.

Youth in Etowah County will be informed of and have access to community services

Action Steps

- 1) The community will be informed of available avenues for education completion through the continued use of Public Service Announcements.
- 2) Collaboration between the committees of the Children's Policy Council to design and distribute a resource guide for parents and teens.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Children in Etowah County will have more opportunities for success in school

Action Steps

1) To help facilitate increase partnerships between high school groups (i.e. Beta Club, SGA) and Big Brothers/Big Sisters to increase peer mentoring and tutoring opportunities.

Educators will be better informed of community resources and agencies

Action Steps

1) To provide training in the following areas: mandatory reporting of abuse and neglect, mental health issues, and community resources.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Families in Etowah County will be physically and mentally healthy

Action Steps

1) Health and safety fairs will be held throughout Etowah County to bring information and health screenings to families, to focus on the middle school ages. Volunteers will be trained and put in the elementary schools on the first day of school and at parents meetings to assist parents in obtaining medical insurance for their children.

Parents will be educated in children's health and safety issues

Action Steps

1) Public Service Announcements will be done regarding issues such as "Smothering babies" as well as informational pamphlets made available to new parents and presentations done in birthing classes, parenting classes and with the teen mothers programs educating parents on the dangers of sleeping with infants.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Faith-based organizations will become involved in educating families about youth concerns

Action Steps

- 1) Communicate concerns about suicide among youth, the dangers of the Internet, and other at-risk behaviors to faith-based organizations offering assistance and speakers to address these and other concerns.
- 2) Provide informational fliers to faith-based organizations that list parent/teen resources.

Parents in Etowah County will have information on child abuse/neglect, juvenile crime, and substance abuse along with the resources that are available to improve family functioning

Action Steps

- 1) Obtain information from United Way in order to produce a flier for community-wide distribution that lists parent/teen resources.
- 2) Support local youth agencies and organizations in doing Public Service Announcements regarding the available resources in these areas.
- 3) Collaborate with other committees to promote safety issues and steps.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Adolescents in Etowah County will have the availability to be paired with mentors

Action Steps

- 1) Coordinate with Big Brothers/Big Sisters in contacting schools to address any barriers mentors and mentoring programs may have in gaining access to students and to promote their access to students in after-school programs.
- 2) Support volunteer recruitment by local interagency promotion and coordination with United Way (211).

Parents in Etowah County will have information on child abuse/neglect, juvenile crime, and substance abuse along with the resources that are available to improve family functioning

Action Steps

- 1) Obtain information from United Way in order to produce a flier for community-wide distribution that lists parent/teen resources.
- 2) Support local youth agencies and organizations in doing Public Service Announcements on issues in adolescents and teens.
- 3) Collaborate with other committees to promote safety issues and steps.

Policy Recommendations

- Require that all schools have Social Workers on site.
- Mandate 5 year old Kindergarten.
- Implement a "Quality Ratings System" for all licensed child care providers.
- Increase child care subsidies for low-income families.
- Expand rural public transportation systems.
- Require school resource officers in every school.
- Expand tutoring, after-school, and summer enrichment programs.
- Implement healthy family programming throughout the state.

Accomplishments

The Children's Policy Council of Etowah County has had a very active year.

- Received a summer VISTA position to help the committees work on the action steps laid out in the 2005 Needs Assessment
- August 10, 2005 had 20 trained volunteers and Medicaid workers in the Title I schools of Etowah County, Gadsden City, and Attalla to offer assistance to parents whose children did not have insurance coverage, serving 65 families
- August 27, 2005 hosted a Children's Health & Safety Fair at Carver Village in Gadsden serving approximately 100 members of the community with participation of over 20 participating agencies
- Worked with community partners in assessing and assisting over 1,000 evacuees from hurricanes Katrina and Rita during September and October 2005
- Received 2 interns from the Human Services program at Gadsden State Community College to assist with projects and grant applications of the council
- Hosted the 2006 Children's Services Conference in February with 125 in attendance from Etowah, Cherokee, Marshall, DeKalb, Cleburne, and Calhoun counties
- March 2006 the Economic Security Committee in collaboration with Mix 102.9 FM and Gadsden State Community College release the first in a series of Public Service Announcements regarding GED completion on line
- May 2006 sponsored a second Children's Health & Safety fair with the City of Attalla at the Carnes Recreation Center serving approximately 100 children and over 20 participating agencies and business

Grants received by the Etowah County Children's Policy Council this last year.

- Department of Children's Affairs- \$500 for administrative and travel expenses for the VISTA volunteer
- Department of Children's Affairs- \$1500 for the Children's Services Conference in February 2006
- Covering Alabama's Children and Families- \$ 1,000 for the health and safety fairs, to order t-shirts to be given to children who attend, to purchase a banner for the fairs, and to help cover the costs of the VISTA volunteer for administrative purposes
- Honda Community Foundation- \$4,000 to print new family pocket resource guides in both Spanish and English, also to help in covering the administrative cost of the VISTA volunteer.